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ABSTRACT

In this study, parents' reasons for school choice were explored at four inner-city school sites by means of a questionnaire distributed to parents by their children. The sample for this study consisted of the parents of over 2,300 students who attend the four schools studied. All are inner-city Catholic high schools located in four different metropolitan areas representing three different regions of the country. Questionnaires were returned from 896 respondants, of whom 86 percent were mothers. Resulting data are presented in six tables: (1) school demographic characteristics; (2) parent sample by the four schools; (3) priority reason for school choice by school; (4) parent characteristics by school and for the total sample; (5) priority reason for school choice by parent characteristics; and (6) school profiles: ranking of priority reason by school. Findings reveal significantly different responses from school to school in the four different metropolitan areas. When responses were examined in relationship to parent characteristics (socioeconomic status, aspirations for child, religion, race), all but aspirations and religion were significantly associated with specific reasons. Thirty-nine references are included. (SI)

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PARENTS' REASONS FOR SCHOOL CHOICE IN FOUR INNER-CITY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOLS: THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO EDUCATION, INCOME, CHILD ASPIRATIONS, RELIGION, AND RACE

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The study of reasons for school choice is becoming an increasingly important new area of educational research particularly as the debate over school vouchers intensifies. So far, what little work has been done has focused on large national surveys (Greeley et al, 1976; Greeley, 1982; Williams, 1983), specific geographic area surveys (Bridge and Blackman, 1978; Frechtling, 1982; Gratiot, 1979; Gerstman, 1979), or smaller surveys conducted at schools representing a particular type (Holmes, 1983). Most often, these studies, relying primarily on questionnaire data, examine a limited number of reasons, neglect to consider how parent characteristics influence reasons for choosing a school, or fail to examine the relationship between reasons for choice and the type of school chosen.

Recent work by Cibulka, et al (1982) and Schneider and Slaughter (1985) is more promising in seeking to understand reasons why parents choose a particular type of private school. In their study of inner-city private elementary schools, Cibulka, et al (1982) concluded that parents choose them not necessarily because they are dissatisfied with public schools, but because they see private schools as much better. These schools were chosen primarily for reasons of quality education and secondarily for religious and moral values. In a study they are currently completing, Schneider and Slaughter (1985) found different patterns of parental choice among four inner-city private elementary schools that were not necessarily related to parent characteristics. Studies in which reasons for choice are examined in the light of specific school organizational characteristics, however, are rare. None have examined the reasons inner-city parents chose Catholic secondary schools, as this study attempts to do. Thus, the prominence of such responses as "academics," "discipline," and "religious training" among reasons for choosing private schools and their relationship to parent characteristics such as education and race are not easily understood. Neither are they understood in relationship to the specific school chosen.

In reflecting on possible reasons why parents with certain types of characteristics might choose a particular private school for their child, it would seem that the school itself plays a role in the decision. For example, do high-income parents who live in upper-middle class neighborhoods and in the vicinity of an elite private high school choose that school primarily for status and peer association reasons? Do welfare parents choose inner-city private schools because they see them as a means for preparing their child to participate in a world of work from which they have been excluded? It is known that private schools are mission-oriented, that is, they see their role in the educational market-place as fulfilling some need that is presumably not being met in the public sector. However, it would be erroneous to conclude that all private schools view their missions similarly. In order to survive in a free-market economy, such schools necessarily must view their function as different from other schools.

In the present study, parents' reasons for school choice were explored at four inner-city school sites by means of a questionnaire distributed to parents through their child during the time in which other data about the school were being gathered.[1] The questionnaire consisted of 25 stated reasons "for sending your child to a Catholic high school" plus one open-ended response category. (See Appendix A.) The stated reasons were based on a systematic review of the literature on reasons for school choice. These studies, like the present one, focus on a variety of reasons parents frequently give for choosing a nonpublic school. Unlike these studies, however, this study is motivated by the need to know more about how parent choice interacts with school characteristics in the choices parents make. Clearly, if we are to understand more fully the selectivity "bias" that characterizes private schools, we need to understand it in relation to the particular school that is selected.

This study was conducted with the following research questions in mind:

1. What reasons do parents in inner-city Catholic high schools give for sending their child to a particular school?

2. What is the relationship between "reasons for choosing" and parent characteristics such as education, income, child aspirations, religion, and race?

3. Do individual schools mediate reasons for parental choice?

Before describing the study, it is necessary to discuss the meaning of the words "mediate reasons for parental choice." In a broad sense, "mediation" implies activity that serves as an intervening or instrumental cause. Private schools embody a specific ideology. This is found in the mission they hold, the policies they make, and the image they project. In addition, this notion includes the attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of parents, teachers, administrators and students about the school; events which occur there; and the arrangement of organizational characteristics such as school size, presence of religious teaching personnel, gender and racial composition, and college-going rates. Thus, private schools act in a way that "causes" parents to choose them for specific reasons. An extensive analysis of the ethnographic data from each school, underlies the supposition that schools mediate reasons for parental choice through their mission, social interaction, and organizational arrangements. These three dimensions of parent-school interaction in relationship to selectivity bias will be more thoroughly discussed later.

METHOD

Sample

The total sample for this study consists of the parents of over 2,300 students who attend the four schools studied. All are inner-city Catholic high schools each located in four different metropolitan areas representing three different regions of the country. Areas served by two of these schools represent a fairly wide range of social economic classes, while two serve predominately poor or working class neighborhoods. All four schools include a substantial number of students from poor families. Schools represent a variety of institutional arrangements regarding gender composition, governance

structure, and school size. Demographic information across the four schools is shown in Table 1.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

The parent sample used in reporting this study on reasons for school choice consists of the returned questionnaires from 896 responders of whom 86% are mothers. Table 2 displays the number of parent questionnaires received from each school. At the largest school, Central Catholic, a stratified random samplying plan was used. At St. Agatha and All Saints, questionnaires were sent to all parents.

(Insert Table 2 about here)

Parents were asked to respond to two questions concerning "a variety of reasons parents frequently give for choosing a Catholic school." For each reason listed, parents were asked 1) "How important was each reason in helping you decide to send your child to this school?" Response options were: "Very Important," "Somewhat Important," and "Not at All Important." 2) "Which reason was the most important? Respondents were directed to "Mark Only One." Only 8 of the respondents selected "Other," the open-ended response category, as a priority reason leading to the conclusion that the list of reasons presented was fairly exhaustive.

Analysis

Given the nature of the sample, as expected, a substantial number of missing responses occurred (give amount). (Quote Ravitch.) Parent responses were converted into frequency data to compare the distribution across the four schools utilizing crosstab tables analysis. Fisher's chi-square significance testing was used to scrutinize the meaning of the interaction effects among three sets of variables: parent characteristics, priority reason for choosing a school, and the four schools.

RESULTS

Reasons for Choosing School

As a first step, it is necessary to determine the reasons parents give for sending their child to a Catholic high school. Table 3 displays the eight most frequently chosen priority reason categories cross-tabulated with each school.[2] (See Appendix A for the distribution of parent responses across the 25 priority reason items by school.) These reasons are in response to the question: "Which reason was the most important?" (Using the priority question is necessary to make comparisons among schools since responses to the question of "how important was each reason in helping you decide" was not sufficiently discriminating.) As expected, there are significant differences at the .01 level among the four schools and the most important reason parents give for choosing it for all but two choice categories: "Child's Choice" and "Shared Value System."

By far, the most frequently chosen category is "Academic Reputation," for all four schools. However, the percentage of parents at All Saints, a mixed-sex school, that choose it for its academic reputation is nearly twice that of parents at St. Catherine's or St. Agatha's, both of which are all-girl schools. While the largest percentage of respondents at both girls' schools choose it for its academic reputation, concern for discipline and about the quality of public schools further differentiate these schools from All Saints and Central Catholic. Preparation for college at St. Agatha's is not as frequently given as a reason for choosing the school as is discipline or concern about the public schools. Parents at Central Catholic have a decidedly different focus in choosing it for its religious and moral training and for its teachers and religious faculty. Thus, aside from considering a school's academic reputation, the schools are chosen by parents for quite different reasons.

(Insert Table 3 about here)

Since reason for choosing a private school could be related to parent background characteristics and not necessarily to the school itself, the next step was to determine the specific parent characteristics associated with the parent group found at each school and then determine the extent to which these factors played a role in the reasons parents give for choosing the school.

An abundance of literature on the strong relationship between family background characteristics and schooling (Coleman, et al, 1966; Jencks, 1972; Sewall, et al, 1976) supports the inclusion of parents' level of education and income as possible influencing factors on reasons for choosing a private school. Higher SES parents can be expected to be more concerned about educational factors in choosing a school for their child than lower SES parents. Similarly, numerous studies confirm the relationship between parents' aspirations for their child's level of educational attainment and success in school (Gordon, 1969, Rodman & Voydanoff, 1978; Sewall and Shah, 1968). It seems reasonable to assume that parents who have higher educational goals for their child seek private schools, especially elite ones, so as to obtain an educational advantage in the college-bound marketplace (Cookson and Persell, 1986). It has been found that parents are more likely to choose denominational schools for religious reasons if they belong to the denomination the school represents (Frechtling, 1982; Holmes, 1983). Thus, for this study parents were asked to report their highest level of education, their total family income per year, the highest level of education they expect for their child, and their religion and race. Demographic information for parents at each school and across the total sample is shown in Table 4.

(Insert Table 4 about here)

Clearly, parent groups differ significantly by school and across the total sample on these characteristics. St. Agatha parents and those at All Saints both have higher levels of education and income than the other two

schools. They are also the two predominately black schools in the sample. This is not unusual, since, as Greeley (1982) has found, it is the more affluent, better-educated and more successful blacks who chose to attend Catholic schools. However, it is interesting to note that, St. Catherine's parents have somewhat higher aspirations for their child than do parents at both St. Agatha's and All Saints, even though they are poorer and more modestly educated. St. Agatha parents resemble more Central Catholic parents in their college-going expectations than either of the other two schools.

Regarding high aspirations, half the parents at St. Catherine's think their child will obtain a graduate or professional degree such as a law degree or Ph.D. even though 46% live below the federal poverty level and 37% never graduated from high school. It may be that their aspirations are discrepant with their expectations. Spenner & Featherman (1978) differentiate "aspirations" and "expectations." In general, studies of parental aspirations show that low-income parents have quite high educational and occupational aspirations for their child (idealistic choices without consideration of real-life constraints). Their expectations, however, may be more modest and take into account practical constraints related to their limited resources that preclude their attaining certain goals (Rodman and Voydanoff 1978). For this study, the question asked of parents, "As things stand now, how far do you <u>think</u> your child will get?" does not lend itself neatly to either definition. Parents could choose one of seven categories representing exit points in the educational system. None chose: "Drop out of school before getting a high school diploma." In this study, parents with high aspirations <u>think</u> their child will accomplish high levels of educational attainment. Most likely, many seek upward mobility through education. While low SES is not necessarily a barrier to aspirations, it might pose problems in terms of future disappointment over the delivery rate of the educational system (Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

Table 4 also shows the religious and racial background characteristics of the parent groups. It is reasurring to note that the parent sample obtained

for this study closely reflects the religion, racial, and income characteristics of the total student populations of the four schools (cf. Table 1). St. Agatha's and All Saints' clients are generally higher SES black families, mostly non-Catholic, while those at Central Catholic and St. Catherine's are lower SES Catholics, predominately white and Hispanic, respectively. The distributions displayed in Table 4, however, indicate that the total parent sample is largely Catholic (65%) and minority (84%). Since there are so few Asians at any of these schools, they are treated as white in this study.

Comparing Tables 3 and 4 would lead to the obvious conclusion that the upwardly-mobile, non-Catholic black parents of both boys and girls at All Saints chose the school primarily for academic and college preparatory reasons with little or no concern about discipline and moral and religious training. These parents seem more able to manage their own children and to steer them on a college-bound, academic-oriented path. Baker and Stephenson (in press) found that higher SES is associated with greater parental management into college. These parents do not choose the school for discipline or control reasons. In contrast, the upwardly-mobile non-Catholic black parents of girls at St. Agatha's chose the school far less for its academic reputation and to prepare for college than do parents at All Saints. Rather, they are more concerned about discipline and safety reasons in choosing the school. It would seem that these parents are less able to manage their own children themselves and therefore chose the school for the control and protection they perceive it to offer.

It is interesting to note that the all-girl schools reflect a greater concern for discipline and safety issues regarding public schools than do the mixed-sex and all-boys' schools. It is understandable that parents of girls might be more concerned aboout their safety in schools than are parents of boys, but choosing an all-girls' school for its discipline raises questions about the consequences of differential sex socialization within minority families. Reid (1972) reported an ambivalence in child rearing practices in

black families toward boys, indicating a willingness to allow them more space. In a study reported by Hare (1985), black women felt that black boys were raised differently, were given more leeway, and that when parents told black girls what was expect of them, the girls were expected to toe the line. Although in Hispanic families generally, boys are more valued, the Hispanic girls in this study were from Puerto Rican households largely headed by women. This, no doubt, is related to the poverty level of mainland Puerto Rican families of whom 50.5 % have annual incomes of less than $10,000. according to the 1980 Census, and nearly half of these families have incomes under $5,000. These parents may envision discipline as a necessary component of their daughter's upward mobility.

Tables 3 and 4 also show that the two poorer, predominately Catholic schools in the study are chosen for dissimilar reasons. Central Catholic, while enjoying somewhat higher SES than St. Catherine parents, nevertheless, choose the school more for its religious and moral training, its religious faculty and other staff with little concern for discipline and safety reasons. These parents also seem more in control of their children and want them to experience adult role models and receive religious and value training through the school rather than preparation for college. Perhaps they see their child's high school education as a more immediate preparation for the workplace rather than preparation for college. In contrast, St. Catherine parents, though somewhat lower SES than Central Catholic parents, are more concerned about preparation for college and for the discipline and potection they perceive the school to offer their girls than they are about religious and moral training. They have high expectations for their girls. Even though they are a predominantely Catholic group of parents, religious and moral training is not as important to them as safety, control, and preparation for college. Perhaps the difference between these two schools concerning religious and moral training is the difference between the more recently-arrived Hispanic, largely Puerto Rican Catholic parents at St. Catherine's, who is just beginning to look for economic security and the more settled,

white, working-class, Catholic parents at Central Catholic whose family background traditions are already rooted in this country and who have more modest expectations.

Given the data presented thus far, it would seem fairly clear that background characteristics play an important role in the reasons parents give for choosing a school, particularly SES. However, what is not clear is the extent to which schools themselves might mediate or influence the reasons parents give, and, in effect, attract a homogeneous group of clients who share a similar view of the educational process. It could be that parents with dissimilar background characteristics in the same school might choose it for similar reasons, depending on the school, and to suspect that the school itself plays a role in mediating the reasons for parents' choice.

In order to test this assumption, a two-way crosstab analysis was first calculated in order to compare parent characteristics across the total sample by priority reason for chosing the school and then a three-way crosstab analysis by school to determine the extent to which parent effects held up across the schools indicating their influence on reasons for choosing. Table 5 displays the frequency of reasons chosen by parents based on their background characteristics across the entire sample. For this analysis, education, income, and race are significantly dependent at the .05 level with parents' priority reason for choosing the school. As expected, priority reason for school choice is dependent on these parent factors, whereas religion and aspirations are not dependent indicating a strong statistical association between SES and race and parents' priority reason for choosing a school. These data indicate that the strongest relationship is found for black parents.

The biggest contributor to this strong dependent relationship between parent factors and reasons is "academic reputation." High-income, moderately-educated blacks choose this reason most frequently followed by "preparation for college." These parents are less likely to be interested in discipline or religious and moral training as a primary reason for choosing a school. After

academic reputation, low-income, moderately-educated Hispanics are primarily concerned about discipline. Low SES blacks and Hispanics are the most concerned about safety and quality of instruction in the public schools. Evidently they are the group who have the greatest need to have their child attend school in a protected and safe environment. Moderately-educated whites of all income levels are most likely to choose religious and moral training as a priority reason.

In sum, higher SES parents tend to give academic reasons for choosing a school, whereas lower SES parents tend to give control and safety reasons. For this study, blacks are the most likely to give these reasons. White, working-class Catholics, a minority in this study, tend to choose religious reasons more than any other group.

(Insert Table 5 about here)

The two-way crosstab analysis (Table 5) comparing parent characteristics with priority reason confirms the comparisions made earlier between Tables 3 and 4. After academic reputation, religious and moral training is the most frequently given priority reason at Central Catholic. This is not unexpected since the predominant parent group at Central Catholic is white, has moderate educational levels, and is about equally distributed across income and aspiration levels. Similarly, the predominant black, high-income, moderately-educated parents at All Saints choose academic reputation and college preparation as the primary reason for choosing the school more than parents at any other school. Again, safety and concern about the public schools is given more frequently at St. Catherine's than at any other school as a priority reason for choosing it. Of all the schools, it has the largest group of low SES Hispanic parents. These findings indicate that priority reason for choosing a school is a predictor of the type of parent group that chooses the school and that the school also seems to attract.

In a final effort to test our hypothesis that parent choice is influenced

by the school itself, we calculated a three-way crosstab analysis controlling for school. When the school was used as a control, all parent effects vanished. Blocking by school confirms the fact that parents' reasons are homogeneous with respect to school. The analysis revealed no significant differences between any of the parent background characteristics and reasons for choosing the school at any of the four schools. Significance levels were all less than .05 indicating the lack of a causal relationship between reasons and parent characteristics within the same school. In examining the results for each school, for example, there were no differences between low and high education, low and high income and other parent characteristics within a particular school and the priority reason they gave for choosing it. Low income parents were just as likely statistically to choose college preparation as a primary reason for choosing All Saints or St. Catherine's as were high income parents. Similarly, high income parents at St. Catherine's and St. Agatha's were as likely to choose discipline and concern for public schools as a priority reason as low-income parents. At Central Catholic, Catholics were as likely as non-Catholics to choose religious and moral training. This leads to the conclusion that the school plays some role in the reasons parents give for choosing it. It would seem that parents in a particular private school think alike in terms of their reasons for choosing it regardless of their SES and race. Thus, reasons for choosing a school are related to the way in which schools tend to attract similar SES and racial groups.

Summary of Survey Findings

An examination of parents' reasons for choosing an inner-city Catholic high school located in four different metropolitan areas revealed significantly different responses from school to school. When the responses were examined in relationship to parent characteristics (SES, aspirations for child, religion and race), all but aspirations and religion were significantly associated with specific reasons. Of the 25 reasons studied, "Academic reputation" was more frequently chosen in all the schools than any other reason. Discipline, preparation for college, religious and moral

training, concerns about the public schools, child's choice, shared value system, and teachers and the presence of religious faculty were chosen in different frequency patterns at each school. Higher SES black parents in these schools tended to choose them for academic reasons. Lower SES black and Hispanic parents tended to choose them for control and safety reasons. Middle and low SES white parents, who in this study tended to be Catholic, chose the school for religious reasons. There were no differences among the four schools nor within the general parent sample on child's choice and shared value system.

While parent characteristics within the general sample were associated with the 8 most frequently chosen priority reasons, these relationships did not not obtain within schools. Parents at the same school gave homogeneous reasons for choosing it regardless of their background characteristics. However, there was a tendency for parents with similar background characteristics to choose the same school.

Assuming that all four schools were located in the same community, it is likely that parents would separate themselves out in fairly homogeneous groups in choosing these same schools again. While private schools select their parents, parents select the type of private school they want their child to attend. This choice, no doubt, depends also on what type schools are available to parents. This study did not investigate the availability of different types of private schools to these parents. It could well be that such choices were limited. However, the availability of public high schools can be assumed. Therefore, the findings of this study are best interpreted in light of reasons why parents who in choosing inner-city private schools are thereby not choosing public schools.

It would seem that inner-city Catholic high schools in attracting a diverse parent population have a tendency to sort that population into homogeneous groups represented by similar parent characteristics. While there may be a matching of parent population to specific school type, there is most likely some parental socialization that also occurs based on how the school

projects itself to parents. This shaping of parent perceptions could well be reflected in the reasons parents give for choosing the school. They may indeed constitute a sort of view or philosophy of the educational process. Such an explanation seems plausible with regard to this study when considering that parents were asked to give their most important reason for choosing the school after their child was already enrolled. If a school emphasizes discipline over college preparation, it will probably attract more lower SES parents. If it emphasizes college preparation, it will probably attract higher SES parents. Parents' reasons for choosing a school could well be skewd by the school selected. This helps us understand why private schools can be more clear about their educational goals than can public schools. While public schools cannot profess a particular ideology or educational view that would attract one interest group at the expense of another, they can be more responsive to parents than they generally are by working with them to create the kind of school that is attractive to those who are there.

Beyond Choice: Private Schools as Mediating Institutions

Field observations and interviews with parents, teachers, administrators, and students provide insights into each school that are helpful in understanding how private schools act as mediating institutions that allow parents some control over their lives by being able to make choices based on that which is of value and has meaning to them (Berger and Neuhaus, 1977). The following ethnographic accounts, based on these observations and interviews, are an attempt to demonstrate how parents' reasons for choosing a particular school are closely associated with what the school is actually like and how this has meaning and value for the particular group of parents involved.

Table 6 displays the profile of priority reasons parents gave for choosing the school in descending order beginning with the reason most frequently chosen. As can be noted, for this study all four schools are chosen most frequently for their academic reputations. Understandably, most parents would not choose to send their child to a private school that was considered

academically inferior. Both girls' schools chose them next for their discipline. After that, profile similarity ends. No two school profiles are exactly alike. The order of the reasons choosen provides an important clue about the school's educational viewpoint or philosophy and how that philosophy makes it attractive to a particular group of parents.

(Insert Table 6 about here.)

Because St. Catherine's and Central Catholic have some school and parent characterisitcs in common, they will be discussed together first followed by the two predominantly black school's, St. Agatha's and All Saints.

It should be noted that in all four schools, the answer most frequently given by students to the question: "Why did you choose to come to this school?" was "my parents." The second most frequently given answer had to do with academic, discipline and safety, or values reasons, depending on the school. These answers closely reflect parents' reasons for choosing the school, as found in the survey, and what was observed at the schools. They also reflect the school's educational philosophy.

It should also be noted that strong agreement was found among the views of the participants within each school about its mission, stated goals, the organizational elements that supported the goals, and the type of social interaction in which the school's goals were reflected.

St. Catherine and Central Catholic High Schools

Both St. Catherine's and Central Catholic have a long, well-established history in their communities. They have occupied their present sites for over 50 years. While both schools serve mainly Catholic parents, St. Catherine's has experienced a complete racial turnover of its student body since the 1960's in contrast to Central Catholic where a gradual turnover is still occurring. Of the four schools studied, the parents in these schools have the lowest levels of educational attainment and income.

The predominant parent group at St. Catherine's is Puerto Rican Catholic. According to the principal, the school has always seen itself as an "immigrant" school and views its mission of serving mainly low SES families in that light. The Irish, Germans, and Italians have been replaced by the newly-arrived Hispanics from other countries, including black families who are recently-arrived from the deep south. These parents seek educational advantages for their girls that were not available to them.

Half the faculty at St. Catherine's are religious women from the teaching order that owns and operates the school. They and the lay men and women who comprise the rest of the faculty are white. Faculty did not experience the same turnover as the student body. Forty percent of the faculty have been at the school ten years or longer; 25 percent of them, mostly the Sisters, graduated from the school.

As a comprehensive high school for "immigrant" girls, the school successfully carries out its mission by preparing a large number of these girls for college as well as for the workplace. In doing so, they maintain a drop-out and absentee rate of less than 1%. Nearly 80% of St. Catherine's graduates enter post-secondary institutions immediately after high school graduation. Of these, over half are awarded scholarships or academic grants. The rest enter the workplace.

Although serving the poorest families of the four schools, the school's intention is to prepare as many students for college as it can. In doing this, systematic methods are employed to help students learn about various college programs and to raise SAT scores. This is done mainly through computer software programs acquired by the school for these purposes.

Students are aware that a criterion for remaining in the school is "always doing one's best" and that the rewards of a high school education outweigh all other considerations. As girls from poor families, they see themselves in the future as able to support themselves and others through the efforts they make in school.

These attitudes are instilled in them through religion classes, through the faculty voicing their expectations, and by providing students with opportunities to view a world that stretches beyond the school's borders. Efforts to do the latter were recounted as follows:

> Since the Bishop's peace pastoral, we now require peace and justice courses. We're very conscious of the function of Catholic Relief Services and so during Lent we try to get the girls to contribute. Each year for the past ten years we've had a walkathon for Bread for the World. We get about one hundred students to walk twenty miles on that particular day. Recently we took all the students to see the movie, Ghandi. So, they are aware of civil disobedience and pacifism. Our neighborhood lends itself to all kinds of social issues. We've gotten into apartheid. It's like putting together the newspaper and the Bible.

The most frequently given answers by students to our interview question about what they thought the school did best for students were related to academic preparation and the support for it that is provided by the school. Teachers say they view the school's mission as one of "affirming the students' goodness and talent and giving them a sense that they can make it" in a demanding world. In holding high expectations for students, they insist that students participate fully in their courses, according to their capabilities. One teacher maintained that she repeatedly told this to students in her class. Several teachers told us, and the sense in the school was, that expectations should not be lowered because of a student"s socio-economic or racial background. The following quotes from different teachers are typical:

> I have high expectations. I have always been a demanding teacher. I expect a lot of them and they must do their homework. They must do their quizzes. I'm getting them ready for their exams. How can they let me down?

> I don't really get into finding out about what environment they come from because I'm afraid that I am going to feel so sorry for them that I'm not going to put the academic demands on them that I would for someone else.

> I don't think your expectations should change because of the type of student you have sitting in front of you. Your whole system would be off kilter. You hold your values. Your values are you no matter who is sitting in front of you in a classroom — black. Hispanic, white, rich or poor.

Students see their own accountability in the self-discipline and sense of responsibility required to do well academically that the school fosters. This is accomplished, in part, by the group guidance courses in which each girl is continuously enrolled during her four years at St. Catherine's. Opportunities are provided for students to work out both their personal and academic problems. It is also accomplished by the way in which discipline is administered and the academic program is structured.

Discipline at St. Catherine's is characterized by a positive and trusting tone. The staff seem able to engage in fruitful dialogue with students about their attitudes and behaviors. An effort is made on the part of faculty and administration to understand the viewpoints students bring that sometimes result in the occasional misunderstandings and confrontations that happen among them. In one incident, rather than admonishing a student who was visibly upset because another student "faced me," the vice-principal was able to patiently help the girl deal with her own behavior that led to the confrontation.

Several teachers reported that when students are presented in class with viewpoints that are frequently different from their own, these viewpoints are not imposed. Rather, there is an expectation that students will develop their own consciences, and not adhere to "blind obedience." This applies to Church teachings as well as moral questions and problems.

The school's organizational arrangements provide a clue about how the school attempts to carry out its academic goals. St. Catherine's employs a systematic but flexible method of assigning students to courses that emphasizes a student's academic learning needs. Classes are assigned numbers that identify their level of difficulty. No students are given track assignments as such; rather, they are assigned to classes of varying degrees of difficulty, depending on their needs. For example, a student assigned to a lower math class might also be assigned to a higher English class. Great care is taken by faculty and administration to maintain a certain individual identity and support for each student that encourages, motivates, and enhances

self-esteem as a learner. Students often told us that they felt challenged and successful in their classes.

School regulations emphasize the acquiring of self-discipline and of internalizing expected behaviors. A system of detention, demerits and disciplinary reports that are referred to parents ensure the necessary school order. Girls who accumulate a number of such reports and fail to improve after their parents' help has been engaged, are asked to leave the school. Few actually do leave.

The school fosters a family spirit among students that is seen as a contrast to the kind of spirit that develops in a public high school. Public schools are viewed primarily as places where teachers seem not to care about whether or not students do their work, and students are not friendly toward one another." Public schools are thought of as "rough." Students believe their school is better than the public school because it is a safe place, it is small, teachers "care about you," and everyone knows one another. This negative attitude about public schools was far more prevalent in the two girls' schools studied than in the boys' or the mixed-sex schools, even though all four schools were located in similarly described inner-city neighborhoods.

At Central Catholic High School, white, working-class Catholics represent the predominant parent group. Of the four schools studied, however, it has the most racially-mixed population.

The school's long history is reflected in the fact that many older brothers and fathers of the students attended the school. In many cases, fathers and sons have had the same teachers. Half the teaching Brothers and one-fourth of the lay faculty graduated from the school. The forging of a common experience is further evidenced in the faculty of whom 54 percent have been at the school over 15 years. In their operation of the school since the 1920's, the religious Brothers have established a teaching tradition and a community spirit among parents, teachers, and students alike that is highly-

valued.

The school serves as a stabilizing influence in a slowly changing neighborhood where Catholic family roots have been set deep. It's mission seems clearly to be one of helping perserve a quality of living that can sometimes seem threatened by changing socio-economic conditions.

In our parent survey, the most frequently given priority reasons for choosing the school, after academic reputation, took the following order: religious and moral training, teachers and religious faculty, and shared values. (See Table 6.)

The school seeks to fulfill its "preserving" mission primarily through religious instruction, Christian example, and the formation of Christian attitudes and values such as service and committment to others. The fostering of specific Christian "religious" values seemed more obvious in this school than in any of the other three studied. The school also strives to ensure an appropriate basic education for all its students. The Faculty Handbook lists three major school goals:

1. To instruct students in the history of salvation: The history of God's love as recorded in the scriptures and as taught by the Church.

2. To encourage total Christian involvement.

3. To provide quality instruction.

Upon graduation, about half the students enter the workplace and the rest attend two- or four-year colleges. An indication of how well the school instills attitudes and values is reflected in the demand for its students by both colleges and employers. School personnel report that the local business community shows a preference in its hiring practices for Central Catholic graduates. Likewise, even though students with college aspirations may not score as well as others on entrance exams, area colleges and universities give preferential consideration to a Central Catholic background. Few students earn college scholarships. The year the school was visited, it boasted one National Merit Scholar, the first in several years.

A carefully-planned instructional program includes the following

features: courses divided into as many as eight levels of difficulty to accommodate student learning needs, smaller class sizes for lower track students, in-school and after-school tutoring by teachers as well as by students for those who need it, and a consistent monitoring of student progress. These features seem to assure the acquisition of basic skills for nearly every student. No student is denied advancement or graduation based on lack of ability. Rather, only a student who earns failing grades because of a lack of effort incurs an academic dismissal. Most dismissals are a combination of financial, academic, and discipline reasons and occur at the end of the academic year. The dismissal rate is about 8 % a year.

According to the Faculty Handbook, the school strives " to create a total Christian community which enables students to experience intellectual and spiritual development." The school does this by providing adult role models and developing strong interpresonal relationships among faculty and students. Besides the relationships that are formed as a result of tutoring, other opportunities for these to develop occur through the after-school sports program and numerous other activities including ethnic clubs in which faculty and students participate. Although school dismissal occurs much earlier in the afternoon, it is not uncommon for most of the faculty to still be at school after 4:00 o'clock. Faculty were characterized repeatedly by parents, students, and one another as being tremendously involved in academic as well as other areas of kid's lives "about which nobody even knows sometimes."

A tremendous amount of rapport between faculty and students was evident and reported by the participants." It's a very friendly atmoshpere, it's not a we-them situation, it's like a community, very open." "We have almost a one-on-one relationship with our students. We tutor them at lunchtime. It is a very personal approach here." To a new teacher at the school, the friendliness and respect were unmistakable:

> The students here are very respectful and it's really been refreshing for me to see it in urban kids, you know. You walk down the corridors and you will see only on rare occasions exhibitions which would not be Christian. Doors have been held open for me here .

> Kids have said hello to me who don;t even know me and call me by name. As a first year teacher, I take notice of that.

The religious faculty are greatly admired and appreciated by the lay faculty, students and parents alike. Lay faculty felt "included" in the way in which the school was operated even though at the same time they showed great deference to the Brothers who "know best what to do." The Brother principal complained about the "pedestal the faculty put us on." In his mind it sometimes caused problems such as when a new, Brother-teacher was treated by them as a better-prepared, more experienced teacher than he actually was, "just because he is a Brother." Parents' awareness of the Brother's stabilizing influence and their appreciation for them are captured in these remarks:

> The biggest thing is the Brothers. They live here. Anytime a student has a problem, he can sit down and talk to a Brother. You see them throughout the summer. They'll stop around the playgrounds, stop at a basketball game..

> One student even lived with the brothers for awhile. They took him under their wing and prepared him, helped him immensely. Here's a kid who's going to Princeton now and doing outstanding work.

Love for and service tothe poor, a spirit of giving, "generosity," and racial integration are important values at this school. Although one of two high schools in the Archdiocese with the largest proportion of students from poor families, Central Catholic consistently outperforms all other Catholic high schools in the annual Archdiocesan drive for the poor. Each boy "gives 50 cents or a buck a day; they bring in a can of this, a can of that" daily, even kids who come from the most socio-economically deprived areas. This generosity and a spirit of giving are also evident in internal fund-raising events and other school activities. The following remark is illustrative of the perspective and attitude of the faculty:

> The kids here are very generous. There are a lot of opportunities in the school to use that generosity. I think that's as important as an education.

Students responded similarly when we asked them what they thought the

school does best for its students:

> We learn that we have responsibilities to other people. That's a big thing here, helping other people. We learn that in religion class and in homeroom. You know, you give money for Mission Bowl or for something. When students leave the school it sticks with them more than some facts they learned in history.

Sometimes an intended community service project has "academic" effects as well as religious ones:

> Christian service puts you out in low-income areas and lets you see how people are suffering maybe because of a lack of an education or lack of ability. It makes you see, "If I don't want to be here also I'll have to learn,...to try to know something so I can get ahead and be somebody."

The development of friendships among those from different racial backgrounds and inclusiveness are other values consciously fostered by the school. The faculty and students alike feel the school is successful in developing these values as indicated by the following anecdotal references:

> After four years a lot of racial prejudice breaks down. Initially there is a lot of fear. You see it at the beginning of the year. Freshmen tend to separate themselves. Once they get here and start working together a lot of that changes. There's an unbelievable difference. I'm not saying it's perfect. There are still racial slurs, but most kids by the time they leave have people of other races for friends. (Teacher Interview)

> This school is integrated. It shows you not to be afraid to interact with other people on a friendly basis. We wouldn't want the whole world to be separated - all blacks, all whites, all Orientals. (Student Interview)

Teachers strive consciously to maintain their rapport with students and students are aware of their strategy:

> The best way to serve our students is to let them know they are OK, even if they have not done well. We treat them with respect. Most of the time comments on papers are positive. You see very few negative comments. It doesn't really work with out students. If they get a negative comment, they really get down on themselves. (Teacher Interview)

> Teachers really do care, you know. It's not that you do well, it's that you try. As long as you're trying, they won't fail a student, if he's trying as hard as he can. That's not the job here to fail kids. They want us to learn. (Student Interview)

Discipline was not high on the list of reasons parents gave for choosing this school. There seemed not to be a great deal of concern about discipline, punishment, and control tactics here. For rule infractions, students attended a detention period which was generally considered "just awful" because it was held at an early morning hour, prior to the beginning of the school day. Students affectionately referred to detention as "sitting for Brother John." Student behavior observed in the halls and classrooms before and after school, and during transition periods between classes, was orderly and purposeful. Students had open access to outdoor areas, the gym, and other school facilities during the school day without the control usually imposed by a pass system.

St. Agatha and All Saints High Schools

Unlike the other two schools in our study, St. Agatha's and All Saints do not share the traditions nor have the longevity that is characteristic of St. Catherine's and Central Catholic. Rather, these schools were begun in the 1960's in response to the Catholic Church's recognition of the need to provide schools for students from low-income families, mainly black, who were unable to pay the rising tuition costs or pass the entrance exams of the more elite, college preparatory Catholic high schools in the archdioceses. All Saints actually began as a girls' school and did not become co-ed until 1979, a fact still reflected in its enrollment composition today. (See Table 1.)

The black parents at St. Agatha's, for the most part, are not newcomers to this country. Many have achieved economic security, though, most likely, not without the struggle that faces the upwardly-mobile black family in this country. Perhaps they have achieved their upward mobility at a cost; even at a cost of being unable to successfully manage their own children's behavior. They want the school to do it. After it's academic reputation, parents say they are attracted to St. Agatha's because of it's discipline <u>first</u>, and then because of concerns about the public schools and a shared value system (see Table 6).

In response, the school has taken on a missionary spirit of "saving" rather unladylike young girls who come from "disadvantaged" backgrounds by inculcating in them a set of values they are presumed not to have in order to make them more acceptable to society. As one department head expressed it:

> We are not trying to deny the fact that their cultural or economic backgrounds have nothing to do with them. It does have a lot to do with forming them. But we are trying to inform them also of another set of values....that they have to be able to get along in this society as educated young ladies.

In contrast to the other girls' school in our study, St. Agatha's seems less sure of its mission. Perhaps, in some ways, it has had one thrust upon it. It is also more ambiguous about how it carries out its goals. One example of this is the modern, fully-equipped but idle home economics department that the Archdiocese has been asking the principal for three years to convert into a math-science computer lab. Home economics has not been offered because " the girls will not take it. They consider it beneath them." The principal feels many girls need it. However, she cannot decide what to do. Another example is the fact that there are many girls attending the school for whom there does not seem to be an adequate program. This will be described later.

In the interviews we conducted, teachers, administrators, and students alike expressed the school's goals in terms of social values. They said, the school instills in students "refinement", "culture", "appropriate attitudes," "manners", "social discipline," "gentle speech," "how to carry yourself," and "ladylike behavior." These goals also include moral responsibility for one's sexual behavior. According to the faculty, parents expect the school to socialize their daughters into appropriate ways of behaving. The school feels it accomplishes this well. As expressed by one of the women religious, also a department head:

> The parents believe that when they (the girls) leave St. Agatha's, they will have some refined young ladies who will have some really fine values....They will have been taught what is right and what is wrong. I think they just become refined.

In addition, fewer pregnancies occur than the school might otherwise

expect from girls who frequently characterized themselves and one another as "rebellious," "wild," or having "reputations." Though these characterizations may have been more talk than actuality, the high rate of parenting among black teenagers is well-documented (McAdoo and McAdoo, 1985). Parents and the faculty proudly credit the school with the fact that "only three or four girls a year drop out due to pregnancy." Evidence of the accomplishment of the school's "saving" mission is anecdotal as expressed in the following remark:

> [Told to a teacher by a returning graduate] St. Agatha's taught me to be a lady. It it weren't for this school, I'd have a baby by now and be living on the street.

In a structured interview with a group of juniors, all nodded their heads in agreement with the following student response to our question about why they come to the school:

> ...because of the discipline, the social discipline that we have here. We all know that in public schools there is a lot of chaos, they have fights, and drugs and everything. I feel that parents feel safer knowing that their daughters are at this school where they know that they are being taken care of and they don't have to worry about them sitting outside eating lunch and all of a sudden somebody shoots at them or a drug dealer may come up to them.

The principal reported that whenever a violent incident is reported at a nearby public school, she always receives a number of phone calls from parents inquiring about enrolling their girls.

"Preparation for college" is relatively low on the list of priority reasons parents give for choosing the school. Not surprisingly, some students feel they do not receive an adequate preparation for college and are thereby hampered in their efforts to gain college entrance. Test score gains are minimal from freshman through senior year. There is no systematic, concerted effort to improve test scores, as far as we could tell. The current senior class membership reflects a 48% turnover rate since freshmen year. However, approximately 40% of last year's senior class entered a four-year college. About one-fourth of these received scholarships. Most students enter the

workplace upon graduation. Some of these continue their education part-time in nearby community colleges. Some wait awhile before continuing their educations. According to some of the students, they wait until they can "get their act together and save their money."

The faculty and administration are sometimes distressed that the students do not perform better in class and on tests. They seem mystified, however, as to how to change that. They take comfort in the fact that some students seem to blossom after graduation. According to one teacher who has been in the school a long time:

> Some of them will go to work but they'll even go to junior college to take courses and things. They'll get in college some way or another. ...you'd really be surprised, some of them really improve. The brain develops later in life or something, but I've seen students come back and they are doing real well. I've known students who were struggling to get C's and they go to college, and they are in sororities and things because they are away from their parents. That is a different study altogether. They get away from their parents. They either live on campus or they are adults now. They don't have to answer to their parents and they really do well because they want to be there and they are not hassling with their parents any more.

One former graduate, a black scholar relatively well-known in her field, was currently completing her Ph.D. at a prestigious university. After handing the fieldworker a letter the woman had written recently to the principal thanking the Sisters for all they had done for her when she was at the school, the principal remarked: "And she was barely a C student when she was here."

As indicated in the quotation from the teacher above, at least some parents are seen as being quite strict with their girls. Their expectations about discipline, protection, and value training do not go unfulfilled. St. Agatha's, though perhaps relutanctly, takes on the role of caretaker for busy parents, providing them with the kind of protective environment that frees them from the worries they feel they would have if their girls were in public schools. As one teacher stated: "Parents send their girls here because they know we will make them work. They will not just be left alone in the classroom." The senior class counselor believed:

> With all the publicity about violence in schools, parents want their daughters protected and this is a safe environment. They don't

> have to worry about them every time they go to school. Christian fathers' want their girls to go to an all-girls' school to keep them away from the boys....They know we are going to be strict and that's what they want....I would guess that for 80% of our students, both parents work....They figure that we'll raise them correctly because they don't have the time to do it.

The principal worries that many parents, besides being strict, have unrealistic expectations about what the school can do with a girl who has a poor attitude or a behavior problem. "They expect us to work miracles." In part, those attitudes may be related to the child's not wanting to be in the school in the first place, an infrequently chosen priority reason at this school. Most of the girls we interviewed said they were in the school, some unhappily so, under great parental pressure.

Organizational arrangements provide a clue about how a school attempts to carry out its purposes. At St. Agatha's, these arrangements emphasize the school's social goals as much as its academic ones. A three-track system sorts students into groups in which they remain, for the most part, throughout their years at the school. According to the students, tracking effects the formation of within group friendships (Hallinan and Sorensen, 1985) attributable to the large part of each day students in the same track spend together. Few girls occupy the upper, or academic track. 80% of the student body are divided between the middle and lower tracks with the greater proportion in the lowest track. The social effect of the uneven distribution is the creation of an elite group in the school, the upper track. In the lowest track, a disproportionate number were black girls who were loudspoken, often with angry and hostile attitudes, and less refined in their manners and in their physical features. Social class cleavages were evident.

Students were disgruntled about the track system. Lower track students not only complained that they missed out on some things in the school, but that they were the ones most frequently in trouble. Girls from higher tracked classes complained that classes were boring and repetitious. They also complained about girls in the lower tracks whom they felt should not be in the school because they were "loose." There were also other reasons for

discontent among the students.

Everyone at St. Agatha's described the school as "structured" and "strict." One teacher characterized the discipline as "tough love." Students often felt that adults were always right and they were wrong. Many rules and regulations were strictly enforced. The school relies on a system of privileges, punishment and favoritism that seemed to work against lower-track black students. The vice-principal reported:

> (Students here) know they are cared about and that the teachers and the staff want the best for them. When they leave here they will know that when punishments were given they were given out not for punishment's sake but to make you realize that whatever took place was for your own good, for your benefit. They leave with a sense that "I was cared about. I wasn't just a number, but they were interested in me personally."

Though this statement is representative of the perspectives and sincerity of many faculty and staff, evidently it was not shared by all students. Many students saw themselves treated, not personally, but as a member of the group to which they were assigned by the tracking system. Many lower track students felt that upper track students "get away with more" and that Hispanics were favored by teachers over blacks, because "they are more quiet." Students also felt teachers favored more students who had college aspirations.

The principal encouraged the privilege system. She felt that such a system would motivate lower track students and younger students to "earn privileges." As best as could be observed, it seemed that this system only caused resentment to grow and did not seem to stimulate motivation in most girls. Rule infractions resulted in detentions and in "writing standards," an exercise in copying the regulations from the student handbook an excessive number of times.

Coming late to school was not tolerated under any circumstances as illustrated by the following account:

> The student handbook notes that "School gates are locked daily at 8:00 A.M." Since we (the fieldworkers) have been here they are being locked at 7:45. Students who arrive after the gates are locked, must return home and miss a day of school. Although students complain

> frequently to us about this school policy, they seem to "buy" the reason for it. One student said: "Sometimes they close the gate in your face. You can be walking over when they are locking it and they still won't let you in, they just close the gates.... She (the principal) tells us she does that because when we get out on our own and we go to a job, we can't be late." (Field Notes)

Social interaction at the school can readily be characterized as friendly, caring, and providing a sense of belonging for most girls inspite of the tensions among groups. An intrusive style on the part of faculty and administration concerning student attitudes, refinement, and other personal characteristics the school wishes to foster, however, keep students in a vulnerable position. They do not like being told they are wrong or that their manners are not "respectful." Students at St. Agatha's however, accept this vulnerability as well as the strictness as a sign of caring. They have come to believe that a certain amount of intrusion, structure and discipline belong in a Catholic school and would be disappointed if it were not there. Their attitudes seem to reflect the school's tough love philosophy as reported by a teacher and confirmed in conversations with the students:

> The students receive a lot of love and caring. They are always telling us that. What that translates into, I would like to assume, is that they are morally formed. I would like to call it that. Sometimes those girls that gave you a lot of trouble come back and give you a big hug saying, "You were my favorite teacher."

Social interactions that are not always as plesant as students would hope at St. Agatha's are soften by their widely-held perception that the school is less hostile and more safe than being in a public school and more rewarding in terms of their future goals (e.g., getting a better job, getting into a better college) than if they had attended a public school.

Parents at the two girls' schools similarly want discipline for their girls as a priority reason after academic reputation. In both schools parents seem to get what they want though the schools are quite different. Perhaps welfare parents, such as were many of the parents at St. Catherine's, because they can be home with their children, are better able to manage their behavior and can motivate them along an academic path even though they themselves lack educational experiences. For them, the school is providing what they cannot

give their children. Similarly, St. Agatha's parents want a structured, protected, safe, and disciplined environment for their girls. Again, for these upwardly-mobile black parents, the school is providing their children with the discipline and values they have not been able nor had time to form in their children. This study raises some interesting insights into the schooling of minority girls that warrants further investigaion.

All Saints is a college preparatory high school committed to preparing black leadership for service to the community. It's mission is to bring blacks into the mainstream of society. Parents here have the highest SES levels of all schools studied. College preparation is high on their list of priority choices. Discipline is infrequently given as a reason for choosing the school. (See Tables 3 and 6.) Many of these upwardly-mobile black parents are already leaders in their communities. The school shares their values in thus preparing students for similar roles.

The school successfully carries out its mission by gaining college admission for 97% of its graduates. Graduates are beginning to be sought out by colleges from around the country. However, most graduates prefer and do best in small, historically black colleges in the south. More than half the graduates qualify for scholarships. Many receive several and have the "problem" of choosing from among them.

The school only accepts students who are college-bound. They must have good grades and be recommended by their current teachers. Parent interviews are required for entrance. About one-third of the freshmen class is admitted on "academic probation." Entering students as well as those already in the school who are put on academic probation, sign an agreement with their parents and the school that they will withdraw at the end of the year if their grade point average falls below a "C." According to the principal, about half the freshman class are "weeded out" by the end of the sophomore year. Most students who leave, self-select out for academic reasons. A few are asked to leave for disciplinary reasons or poor attendance.

Many students who enter the school do not have high enough achievement

test scores to gain access to other college preparatory schools. According to the principal, if they chose to attend a public school, they would not qualify and therefore would not be placed in a college preparatory track. There are no tracks at All Saints. All follow a college-preparatory curriculum.

Although the smallest of the four schools in this study, All Saints has the fullest complement of full-time administrators, guidance counselors, a campus minister and registrar, of any of the other schools. This is most likely a factor in helping it carry out its goals.The teaching faculty are predominantly white males, several of whom are priests, both diocesan and some representing various religious orders. They are described as "incredibly dedicated," "committed to the school's mission to educate black leaders," and as "wearing many hats." "There isn't anyone on the faculty who refuses or stands aloof from putting in time after school on difficult projects with the kids." "Everyone here gives 110 percent everyday." As at Central Catholic, teachers were perceived as giving an enormous about time to students beyond the classroom.

One of the ways in which the school seeks to fulfill its mission of preparing community leaders is through the leadership program. Students must enroll for two out of the four years in leadership training classes that emphsize self-knowledge and practical interpersonal skills. The classes also focus on accomplishments of historical and contemporary black leaders. Leadership is emphasized outside the classroom as well. Below, two upper classmen recount what the leadership program has done for them.

> When I first came here, I had a certain impression among my peers. And the feedback that I got from them helped me to change or adapt so that I would become more appreciated by them. It was due to programs in the school. Like in my freshmen year we had a leadership class. It helped me to build inner personal skills; it helped me communicate with others. Then I took the class again in my junior year. And there was a gradual build up. I managed to build my character.

> Your leadership is tested here in a lot of ways, through class participation, student government. There are a lot of ways you can display your leadership. You have to deal with your self-concept as far as having a positive attitude and that all goes into it. And that's where we learn how to speak effectively. One of the things we do when we first come here is the leadership class which is required.

> And you stand up there in front of the class and you say different things, and it lets you get acquainted with yourself about speaking with other people.

The most frequently given answers by students to our interview question about what they thought the school did best were related to college preparation and developing leadership skills. Everyone related how the school pressed students to perform academically at the highest level of which they were capable. At the same time, a strong supportive atmosphere characterized both student-faculty relationships and student-student relationships. Students frequently used such words as "challenging," "rigorous," "demanding," "suffering" and "surviving" to describe their feelings about the school. They equally used words such as "family," "unity," "closeness," and "support." This combination of the demand for high quality work and a supportive environment seems to be an important factor in helping the school reach its goals (Wasserman, 1970).

Teachers were vigilant about how far they could press students. The following quotations from student interviews communicate the way in which they perceived the demands placed on them:

> Teachers here push you. But when you sit back and look at all the homework and you finish with it, you say it is going to pay off in the end. After all this grueling homework and all these big exams and it was worth it!

> The teacher may talk to you and say, "I know you could do better if you tried." You give him a good reason, but they are going to keep pushing on you until you tell the truth. They want you to make the best grades you can.

> Our teachers are hard on us. If you don't want to do it, they'll put it in your brain for you!

> My foreign language teacher, she's unyielding. She doesn't have any heart.... The teachers here don't give you no mercy. I think that's really for your benefit in the end, if you think about it. Because if you go to college...you're your own man. Teachers don't care about you. You're going to have to take responsibility upon youself. If you start off now, I think it's better for you in the end.

Classroom instruction is fast-paced as well as demanding and rigorous.

Students are required to take notes, write up their science experiments in detail, and do a lot of other writing including research papers in their junior and senior years. Most of the students we interviewed described what they did in classes as being "like it is in college." The principal characterized the teachers as "expecting the kind of learning that goes on in college — critical thinking, analysis." This approach was not an easy one on teachers or students. It was a struggle. Our classroom observations confirmed the descriptions we heard from teachers and students as recounted below. These typical of a number of teachers' views.

> What I'm looking for is not that they will necessarily agree with me. What I'm looking for is that they're able to have some kind of concept of what it is and give me supporting reasons why. And I grade their essays on how well they do that. The idea of really thinking about things, and that's what I ask....I want them to look at opposing views, to understand those opposing views so that when they come to some kind of conclusion about their own ideas, their own beliefs, that they are well-founded; that they're examined; that the values have been questioned. To me that's education.

> Now the English survey course is not strictly English survey, because we're talking about a minority group, it's usage, English usage....So, there's always the review of usage and a great deal of writing. I teach different styles of writing...and then its English literature. We started with Beowulf and now we are working through Chaucer. God love us all! And I incorporate Chaucer into the writing. They did their own modern-day Canterbury Tale. They were very, very good. In another class I am teaching we are doing a unit in methodology which you have to have for understanding literary illusions.

> Two years ago we put in the research paper in American literature and frankly our kids cannot handle literary research topics simply because the books that they would have to use, the journals and stuff, simply aren't written for high school students and our kids have enough problems with that. So I don't try to do literary topics. Every year I start out and I get ideas and then I start looking through these journals again and "shew." There is just no way....So, this year I assigned murders...and most of the reading came out of newspapers. Basically the reason for that was that I mainly got cut-and-paste, semi-plagerism, on most research papers, not a lot of their own writing. I must say, these kids got into it much more, researched it much better. It was easier for them...it was better organized, it's beginning, middle, and end. But they got into the reasearch of it, and I've never had kids do research the way these kids did, and some with 80 or 100 sources that they were dealing with. Usually I'm lucky to get five. They got to be a problem actually because they were so busy researching, they wanted to know everything....But the writing was more their writing. They

made efforts to put it together. Their creativity shone through.

Teachers from all subject areas frequently reported that the most important thing taught in the school was English usage and writing. They are "needed to ensure success in high education." The school insists on the use of proper English at all times, even outside the classroom. Students told how the learning process continues: "...even on the basketball court, baseball field...the coaches correct you when you are speaking incorrect English."

The school is different from the other schools observed in that it could be described as having a professional teaching culture (Rossman, et al, 1985), that is, one in which teachers work together constantly trying out new methods and techniques for helping students succeed in the classroom. "We review our curriculum every year and try to improve it." "We've been here six years and the curriculum has changed drastically at least three times." "We are constantly reading and trying to get more information so we can help one another with problems." "The concept of academic freedom and respect for the integrity of the teacher is endorsed here." And, perhaps the greatest tribute one teacher could pay another:

> Teachers here are very professional. They are outstanding in their fields. There are some teachers here from whom I would like to take their course because I know what kind of teaching they are doing.

As at Central Catholic, the teachers here are very much involved with students outside the classroom. Most of their activity centers around helping students with their work by tutoring them and helping them obtain the materials they need to do assignments even if that means driving them to the public library on a Saturday. Most teachers moderate several extra-curricular activities including directing class plays and the school chorus. Teachers also take several students at a time on weekend trips to check out various state universities. Students like the personal attention they receive, enjoy the close personal relationships that develop, and are genuinely appreciative and admiring of their teachers. One married layman in particular was often singled-out by students for his efforts in helping them learn. For example,

> We have one teacher here, and if you have a research paper that needs to be turned in and you couldn't get it to him, he'd get into his truck and drive up to your house and get it from you. And he'd go to the library with you, do just about anything to help you out with your grades. Where are you going to find a teacher like that!

Most teachers are very popular with the students and strong interpersonal relationships develop among them, as at Central Catholic. Inspite of the heavy demands placed on them and the teachers' concerns that they are working students too hard, student response to their teachers is positive. After describing how difficult the work was at the school, a student added: "You'd be surprised how much the students like the teachers here. If something happened to any of the teachers, people would be sick."

Close relationships also develop among students, perhaps out of a need to survive. They study together, help one another, especially someone whose grades are down. Students talked a great deal about the family atmosphere in the school. They spoke of other students as being "like your borthers and sisters" and teachers as "mothers and fathers." One boy said he looked forward to coming to school everyday because it was like "coming to another home." Several teachers mentioned that they thought and cared about the students as "one of their own."

Some teachers go on weekend retreats with students and that's where some students claim they really get to know their teachers:

> We all spill our guts and everybody talks. Its really a great thing. When I went I found out from the ones that went with us, that the teachers are really on our side, even though it seems they're pushing us. They know what we can do and so they push us to that point.

The school's atmosphere is open , friendly and trusting. Discipline does not seem to be a problem. Students serve detention periods with individual teachers, as needed. Student behavior and academic progress are monitored weekly, however, and the principal has a strategy that helps keep students ever mindful of why they are at the school. Across the main hallway hangs a huge banner placed there by the students reflecting the fact that the

principal never forgets to say to any student with whom he speaks, "And by the way, how are your grades." He expects and listens to a detailed accounting that forces students to evaluate honestly their own progress.

Consistent monitoring of student progress is the result of administrative arrangements as well as a great deal of cooperation among teachers. The principal, head guidance counselor, dean of studies, and campus minister meet together weekly to share information and plan strategies for students who are on academic probation. Every two weeks "every kid who is in trouble is reviewed and then we divy them up among us and go after them. So, they are being rattled about every other week. Then there is a lot of parent commitment to the rattling, too."

For these upwardly-mobile black parents, All Saints school prepares their child for college and provides them with the skills to become successful leaders in a multi-ethnic culture. These are the parents' values as well as those of the school.

That the Catholic Church is contributing to the education of these students, many of whom are not Catholic and most likely will never become Catholics, is timely, as told by the black president of the school board:

> Historically the Catholic Church is a white church and has never really had an interest in evangelizing blacks, although they are very spiritual people. They are mainly Baptists because, when we were still slaves, the Baptist Church was the one that welcomed us. And we bound together in that church and we're still there. The Catholic Church could have come, but it didn't. Maybe it's here for us now.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The data regarding parents'reasons for choosing a school, and the ethnographic accounts of the schools presented here suggest that parents' views of the schooling process as reflected in their reasons for choosing it are closely linked to the school's goals and the way in which the school attempts to achieve them. Parents are not assigned to these schools. They are freely chosen. Their initial reasons for choosing them could easily differ

from the reason they give now after their child has been in the school. Further research is needed to determine whether or not parents' reasons change once they are in the school, that is, to determine the extent to which schools mediate parents' values. The data presented here can only claim a relationship betwen the reasons parents now give once they are in the school and suggest the possibility that parents become socialized once they enter and decide to remain in the school. After all, parents can freely leave the school if they do not agree with its educational view.

This study has implications for both public and private schools, particularly Catholic schools. It reveals findings that are helpful in understanding differences between the two sectors that might relate to school success. It raises the question about Catholic school "identity" today particularly for those which enroll a substantial number of non-Catholics who are not choosing these schools for religious reasons.

As has been suggested by Chubb and Moe (1986), private schools possess a set of environmental conditions that exerts an important and systematic influence over the development of the organizational characteristics necessary for success. They argue that these have to do with questions related to the autonomy or control exercised in the two sectors and the degree of organizational complexity. No doubt it is also related to the kind of cooperation a school can expect from its clients if parents choose the school rather than being assigned to it. But choice also suggests constraint. Private schools are constrained by parents' wishes. In considering the above descriptions of the four schools, would a particular school loose many of its clients if it tried to become more like another school? For example, if St. Agatha's decided to restructure its educational programs and its incentive system and become more like All Saints, would this same group of parents continue to support the school? Perhaps not. If this is so, considerable doubt can be cast over the notion that private schools enjoy an autonomy that contributes to their effectiveness. Rather, they enjoy a clientle that agrees with them concerning how the educational process ought to proceed. It would

seem that parents wishes and support are strong factors in the way in which schools, both public and private, conduct their business.

For inner-city Catholic high schools, these findings have important implications. Parents seem to be choosing them primarily for educational advantages and for control reasons. They do not seem to choose them primarily for religious reasons. In their role as inner-city private schools, Catholic high schools today are providing an option to parents that most would not have if these schools were not there. While some parents, especially Catholic parents, may choose them for religious and moral training reasons, it does not seem that this is an important reason for most inner-city parents who send their children to these schools. Catholic schools may have to be content with less emphasis on catechesis particularly where they are attracting large numbers of non-Catholic parents, and re-focus their concerns about "Catholic identity" to include rather than exclude these newcomers to Catholic schools. The other choice is to abandon the impressive historical role played by these schools in mainstreaming ethnic groups into American society (Greeley, 1982, Greeley and Rossi,1966; Sanders, 1981). Catholic schools have a record of being able to work successfully with the upwardly-mobile. They may be the best hope for creating a new black and Hispanic professional upper middle class in this country.

FOOTNOTES

1. The four schools in this study were part of a larger study conducted by Catholic University under the sponsorship of the National Catholic Education Association and funded in part by the Ford Foundation. The authors gratefully acknowledge the opportunity and funding provided by NCEA to conduct site-visits at these schools in connection with their national study of Catholic high schools serving low-income families (NCEA, 1986).

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2. Out of the list of 25 reasons, only the eight most frequently chosen were retained for the analyses since fewer than 4% of the parents at any one school indicated any of these others as a priority. In addition, there were no significant differences among the schools on these discarded items.

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Table 1

School Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	School			
	St. Catherine	St. Agatha	All Saints	Central Catholic
Location	East	West	Midwest	East
Governance Structure	Religious Order Owned & Operated	Diocesan Owned-Religious Order Operated	Diocesan Owned and Operated	Diocesan Owned-Religious Order Operated
Gender Composition	Girls	Girls	Mixed (Girls- 62%; Boys 38%)	Boys
Enrollment (Approximate)	780	325	300	1000
Race				
Black	35%	85%	99%	34%
Hispanic	55%	15%	-	-
White	10%	-	-	63%
Asian	-	-	1%	3%
Students from Poor Families[1]	46%	20%	20%	36%
College Bound	79%	40%	97%	58%

[1]Poor = Annual Family Income < $10,000
(Estimate based on documentation obtained at school)

Table 2

Parent Sample by the Four Schools

Respondents	School				
	St. Catherine	St. Agatha	All Saints	Central Catholic	Totals
No. Returned	437	187	136	136	896
Responders					
Mother	322	138	114	102	676
Father	68	25	16	21	130
Other	20	16	2	9	47
Total[1]	410	179	132	132	853

[1]Missing Cases = 43

Table 3

Priority Reason for School Choice
by School (Percentages)

Reason	School					
	St. Catherine	St. Agatha	All Saints	Central Catholic	Total	Chi-Square
	(n=341)	(n=94)	(n=103)	(n=117)	(n=655)[1]	
Academic Reputation	33.4%	36.2%	61.2%	44.4%	40.2%	$x^2 = 37.56$*
Discipline	19.9%	18.1%	1.0%	6.0%	14.2%	$x^2 = 30.55$*
College Preparation	14.1%	7.4%	20.4%	5.1%	12.5%	$x^2 = 18.49$*
Religious/ Moral Training	6.5%	5.3%	1.9%	18.8%	7.8%	$x^2 = 35.89$*
Concerns About Public Schools	9.1%	14.9%	2.9%	1.7%	7.6%	$x^2 = 10.48$**
Child's Choice	8.5%	4.3%	4.9%	6.8%	7.0%	$x^2 = 6.22^{ns}$
Shared Value System	5.0%	11.7%	6.8%	6.8%	6.6%	$x^2 = 1.6^{ns}$
Teachers/ Religious	3.5%	2.1%	1.0%	10.4%	4.1%	$x^2 = 20.65$*

[1]Total Significance- $x^2 = 118.39$ $p < .001$
* $p < .001$
** $p < .01$

Table 4

Parent Characteristics by School and for the Total Sample (Percentages)

Characteristics	School				
	St. Catherine	St. Agatha	All Saints	Central Catholic	Total
Education	(n=426)	(n=183)	(n=132)	(n=136)	(n=877)
High- 2yr College Graduate+	17.1%	26.2%	34.1%	13.2%	21.0%
Med- Completed High School	46.0%	55.8%	58.3%	64.0%	52.7%
Low- No High School	36.9%	18.0%	7.6%	22.8%	26.3%
	Significance- $X^2 = 69.09$ $p < .001$				
Income	(n=387)	(n=158)	(n=130)	(n=133)	(n=808)
High- $20,000+	23.3%	42.4%	52.3%	31.6%	33.0%
Med- $10-20,000	30.7%	29.1%	32.3%	32.3%	30.9%
Low- Below $10,000	46.0%	28.5%	15.4%	36.1%	36.1%
	Significance- $X^2 = 58.99$ $p < .001$				
Aspirations for Child	(n=430)	(n=185)	(n=132)	(n=134)	(n=881)
High- Obtain Advanced Degree	50.0%	42.7%	46.2%	23.9%	43.9%
Med- Complete College	23.0%	22.7%	41.7%	38.8%	28.2%
Low- Complete H.S./Some Coll	27.0%	34.6%	12.1%	37.3%	27.9%
	Significance- $X^2 = 55.15$ $p < .001$				
Religion	(n=429)	(n=182)	(n=133)	(n=133)	(n=135)
Catholic	75.5%	47.3%	42.9%	79.3%	65.3%
Non-Catholic	24.5%	52.7%	57.1%	20.7%	34.7%
	Significance- $X^2 = 87.13$ $p < .001$				
Race	(n=417)	(n=180)	(n=131)	(n=135)	(n=863)
Black	34.1%	80.0%	98.5%	27.4%	52.4%
Hispanic	57.0%	19.4%	.7%	.7%	31.9%
White	8.9%	.6%	.8%	71.9%	15.7%
	Significance- $X^2 = 622.04$ $p < .001$				

Table 5

Priority Reason for School Choice by Parent Characteristics

Reason	Parent Characteristics														Total
	Education			Income			Aspirations for Child			Religion		Race			
	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low	High	Med	Low	Cath	Non-Cath	White	Black	Hispanic	
	(n= 559)			(n= 520)			(n= 558)			(n= 560)		(n= 553)			(n=566)
Academic Reputation	9.3%	25.9%	11.3%	17.9%	15.6%	13.1%	21.9%	12.4%	12.5%	31.4%	15.4%	9.0%	25.9%	11.5%	46.5%
Discipline	2.7%	7.3%	6.4%	4.2%	4.0%	8.3%	6.6%	5.7%	3.1%	11.8%	4.6%	1.4%	6.5%	8.5%	16.4%
College Preparation	4.5%	6.4%	3.6%	6.0%	3.7%	4.6%	6.3%	4.3%	3.9%	5.9%	8.4%	1.6%	8.0%	4.5%	14.5%
Religious/Moral Training	1.3%	5.9%	2.0%	3.1%	3.1%	3.3%	3.9%	2.9%	3.3%	7.3%	1.6%	4.2%	2.9%	2.2%	9.0%
Concerns About Public Schools	2.1%	3.2%	3.4%	1.9%	2.9%	3.3%	1.9%	2.9%	3.3%	6.3%	2.5%	.9%	4.0%	4.2%	8.8%
Teachers/ Religious	1.1%	2.7%	.9%	2.1%	1.7%	1.2%	1.2%	1.7%	2.1%	3.2%	1.6%	1.8%	2.0%	.9%	4.8%
Significance	X^2= 22.35 p = .042			X^2= 18.88 p =.013			X^2= 6.17 p = .801			X^2= 8.62 p = .125		X^2= 62.12 p <.001			100%[1]

[1]Total Significance- X^2 = 109.89 p <.001

Table 6

School Profiles: Ranking of Priority Reason by School

	School			
Reasons	St. Catherine	St. Agatha	All Saints	Central Catholic
1.	Academic Reputation	Academic Reputation	Academpic Reputation	Academic Reputation
2.	Discipline	Discipline	College Preparation	Religious/Moral Training
3.	College Preparation	Public Schools	Shared Values	Teachers/Religious
4.	Public Schools	Shared Values	Child's Choice	Shared Values
5.	Child's Choice	College Preparation	Public Schools	Child's Choice
6.	Religious/Moral Training	Religious/Moral Training	Religious/Moral Training	Discipline
7.	Shared Values	Child's Choice	Discipline	College Preparation
8.	Teachers/Religious	Teachers/Religious	Teachers/Religious	Public Schools

Appendix A

Distribution of Parent Reponses
Across Priority Reason Items by School

Reason	School				
	St. Catherine	St. Agatha	All Saints	Central Catholic	Total
	(n=393)	(n=118)	(n=114)	(n=125%)	(n=750)
1. Academic Reputation	114 (28.8%)	34 (28.1%)	63 (55.3%)	52 (41.3%)	263 (34.8%)
2. Discipline	68 (17.1%)	17 (14.0%)	1 (.9%)	7 (5.6%)	93 (12.3%)
3. College Preparation	48 (12.1%)	7 (5.8%)	21 (18.4%)	6 (4.8%)	82 (10.8%)
4. Shared Value Systems	17 (4.3%)	11 (9.1%)	7 (6.1%)	8 (6.3%)	43 (5.7%)
5. Child Wanted to Attend	27 (6.8%)	3 (2.5%)	3 (2.6%)	5 (4.0%)	38 (5.0%)
6. Available Public School Unsafe	21 (5.3%)	4 (3.3%)	2 (1.8)	1 (.8%)	28 (3.7%)
7. Moral Training	13 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (.9%)	12 (9.5%)	26 (3.4%)
8. Religious Education	9 (2.3%)	5 (4.1%)	1 (.9%)	10 (7.9%)	25 (3.3%)
9. Available Public School Offers Poor/Ltd Curriculum	10 (2.5%)	10 (8.3%)	1 (.9%)	1 (.8%)	22 (2.9%)
10. Affordable Tuition	8 (2.0%)	4 (3.3%)	3 (2.6%)	3 (2.4%)	18 (2.4%)
11. Presence of Religious	5 (1.3%)	1 (.8%)	1 (.9%)	9 (7.1%)	16 (2.1%)
12. Teachers	7 (1.8%)	1 (.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.4%)	11 (1.5%)
13. Helps Students With Learning Problems	6 (1.5%)	4 (3.3%)	1 (.9%)	0 (0.0%)	11 (1.5%)
14. Brothers/Sisters Attnd	5 (1.3%)	4 (3.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (.8%)	10 (1.3%)
15. Special Programs	7 (1.8%)	1 (.8%)	2 (1.8%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (1.3%)

Reason	School				
	St. Catherine	St. Agatha	All Saints	Central Catholic	Total
16. Willingness to Address Social & Moral Issues	6 (1.5%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (.9%)	1 (.8%)	10 (1.3%)
17. Positive Influence of students on my child	4 (1.0%)	1 (.8%)	3 (2.6%)	2 (1.6%)	10 (1.3%)
18. Child's Friends Attend	2 (.5%)	1 (.8%)	2 (1.8%)	3 (2.4%)	8 (1.1%)
19. Class Size	4 (1.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (.9%)	1 (.8%)	6 (.8%)
20. Availability of Transportation	4 (1.0%)	2 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (.8%)
21. Location	2 (.5%)	3 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (.7%)
22. Parents/Relatives Attnd	3 (.8%)	2 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (.7%)
23. Buildings/Facilities	1 (.3%)	1 (.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (.3%)
24. Athletic Programs	1 (.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (.1%)
25. School is Open To Parents Ideas	1 (.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (.1%)

Note. Items 7 & 8 were combined to form construct- Religious/Moral Training.
Items 6 & 9 were combined to form construct- Concerns About Public Schools.
Items 11 & 12 were combined to form construct- Teachers/Religious.
Items 5 & 10 were combined to form construct- Child's Choice.